

17<sup>th</sup> December 2016

## LONDON CHESS CLASSIC DAY 8 ROUND-UP

The penultimate round of the London Chess Classic saw Wesley So officially win the Grand Chess Tour with a round to go by drawing his game against Caruana. Anand cashed in on Veselin Topalov's decline with an opening novelty that seized an initiative he never relinquished. Meanwhile in the East Hall the biggest Super Rapidplay yet, held in [memory of Michael Uriely](#), got under way, with 471 players (45 of them GMs!) taking part.



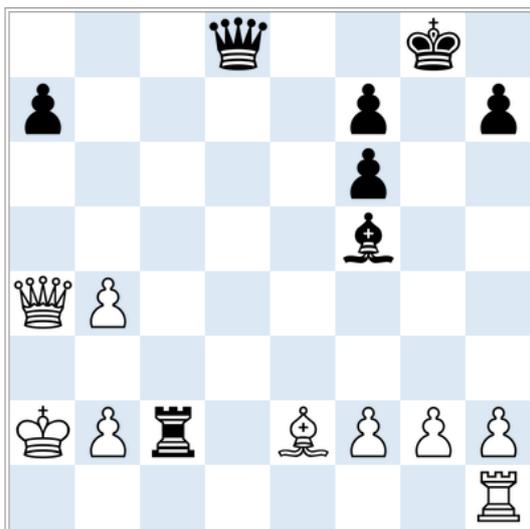
Vishy Anand explaining the finer details of his game (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

The first game of the day to finish was Nakamura-Aronian, which fizzled out to a draw relatively quickly. After the game, Aronian summed up what happened: 'I just play this line and if White plays solidly it's difficult to win with Black. Today there was not much of a game.' Nakamura meanwhile expected his opponent to play something more aggressive: 'Levon was very solid and I didn't really have any great ideas for today and I didn't want to take any big risks', but also lamenting it would have been nice to get a real game.

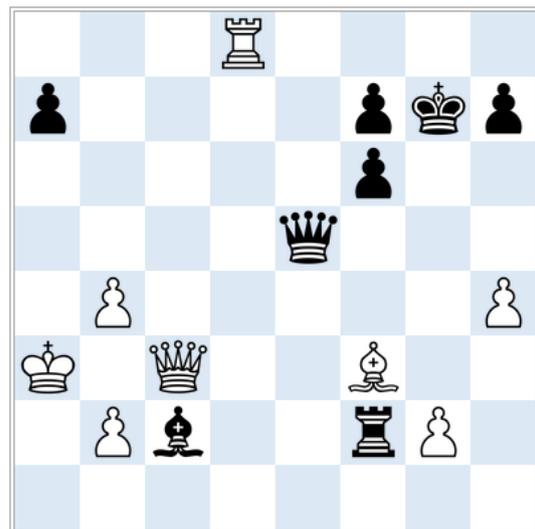
Next up was the most anticipated clash of the day, where tournament and GCT leader Wesley So played very accurately to hold Fabiano Caruana to a draw with the black pieces. This means So has officially won the 2016 Grand Chess Tour and the 100.000\$ cheque that goes with it with a round to spare – an impressive achievement! This is what the champion had to say right after the game: 'I'm very happy to win the Grand Chess Tour, this is a huge success for me. As usual I would like to thank the Lord for letting me win such a prestigious tour.' He also thanked all the sponsors and organisers

who made these events possible, acknowledging that competing against the best players in the world helped him improve his play. Going back to the game, Fabiano thought he had a very pleasant ending, but admitted he completely underestimated 18...Rae8, 'which equalised on the spot'.

Then it was the turn of the Tiger of Madras to pounce, as he beat Veselin Topalov in a clash between former World Champions. After the game, Vishy credited his second, the Polish GM Grzegorz Gajewski, with the interesting move 12...b5, after which he said they had analysed 7-8 different possible replies. He went on to explain the position that arose on the board was incredibly complex and that it was difficult to calculate everything. Vishy first thought that he was winning after playing 25...Rc2, but then realised things weren't so easy and Topalov defended excellently for a while, before first going wrong with 31.h4 and then blundering the game away with 33.Qc3? after which Qb5! (threatening Qa4 or Qa6 mate) 34.Qc6 Rxf3!+ forced resignation.



Position after 25...Rc2



Position after 33.Qc3?, when Qb5! wins on the spot

The last two games of the round were both drawn, but while Kramnik-Giri was a balanced encounter where neither player ever had a real edge, England's number one player Michael Adams outplayed Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and the latter was forced to defend a rook ending a pawn down to secure the half point.

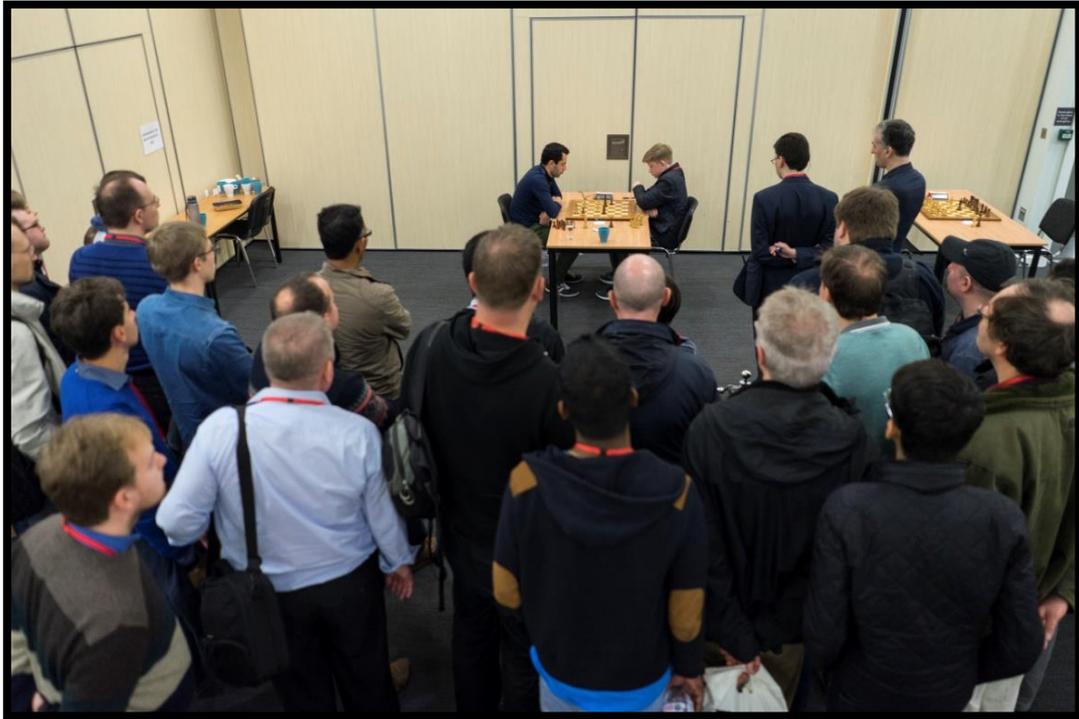
This means that going into tomorrow's last round, the Grand Chess Tour may have been decided, but there is still all to play for. The second prize in the GCT worth \$50,000 is still up for grabs and Caruana only trails So by half a point in the London Chess Classic standings. Nakamura, Anand and Kramnik are a full point behind So, but can still hope for a playoff should the tournament leader slip up in his game against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (a player he has a classical score of -3 against, excluding draws). Caruana will be taking on Giri with the black pieces, while Anand and Kramnik face up in another clash between former World Champions.



Michael Uriely's sister Noga got the round under way by playing 1.d4 for Caruana (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

After the conclusion of the British Knockout Championship, the FIDE Open and all other side events, the East Hall was invaded by 471 players (45 of them GMs!) to participate in the biggest Super Rapidplay to date, held in [memory of Michael Uriely](#).

The tone of the tournament was set from the get-go, as in round 1 top seed GM Hrant Melkumyan was held to a draw by 13-year old Alex Golding from Sussex, who is rated a mere 800 points below the Armenian in FIDE's rapid ratings! Afterwards Hrant praised the youngster's play and asked Tournament Director Malcolm Pein what Golding's rating was. At this point Malcolm received a diplomatic incoming phone call and had to make his excuses! Pein was to blame for this episode as in keeping with the event being in memory of a talented junior player, he invited twelve juniors to play GMs on the top boards.



A crowd gathered to watch Alex Golding hold Melkumyan to a draw (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

It was an action-packed day, with lots of brilliancies, many mistakes and a fair share of drama. Halfway through the tournament, there are still seven players on a perfect 5/5 score: GMs David Howell, Eduardo Iturrizaga, Andrei Istratescu, Eltaj Safarli, Alexander Shabalov, Erik Blomqvist and Matthieu Cornette. The action resumes tomorrow at 12pm GMT.



Howell and Safarli are two of the leaders of the Super Rapidplay after Day 1 (Photo: Lennart Ootes)

You can find all the photos from the festival, taken by Lennart Ootes, on the [following page](#). The results and tournament details are all on the [LCC website](#) and you can also download the PGN files of the games by clicking on the following links:

- London Chess Classic: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/pgn/lcc2016/lcc08/games.pgn>
- Super Rapidplay: <http://www.games.livechess.co.uk/classic16/superrp/rp16all.pgn>

All the live games will be broadcast at: <http://live.londonchessclassic.com/>

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